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Wednesday, 28 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

Second report of the General Committee (A/53/250/Add.1)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Second report of the General Committee of the General Assembly, document A/53/250/Add.1, concerns a request by the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item entitled "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo", as well as a request by the Islamic Republic of Iran for the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations".

In paragraph 1 of the report, the General Committee recommends that the General Assembly include in the agenda of the current session the item entitled "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee recommends that the General Assembly include in the agenda of the current session the item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that this additional item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 28

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/458)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.12)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Spain to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.12.

98-86218 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Spain, and on my own behalf, I wish to place on record our particular pleasure at addressing the plenary of the General Assembly under agenda item 28 in order to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.12, concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The original text of the draft resolution was prepared jointly by the delegations of the States members of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Secretary-General, in his report to the General Assembly submitted on 5 October 1998, indicates that cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union has intensified throughout the past year, with the two organizations conducting a number of joint activities, thus strengthening each other. Mr. Kofi Annan gives a detailed account of these activities, which unquestionably represent a significant contribution on the part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at a time — as indicated in resolution 52/7 — at which the United Nations is preparing itself to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century.

This cooperation offered by the Inter-Parliamentary Union extends to the organizations of the United Nations system, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Furthermore, I wish also to mention that the opening in March 1998 of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York has facilitated and greatly contributed to the strengthening of its cooperation with our Organization.

In this respect, I take this opportunity to convey my warm thanks to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Anders Johnsson, as well as to the staff of the secretariats of the two organizations, for their valuable assistance in support of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The positive picture that I have briefly outlined shows the potential of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which also enjoys broad support among the States Members of our Organization. Indeed, as will be clearly seen, the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.12 is sponsored by 94 States Members. In addition to those States, the following have become sponsors: Angola, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, El Salvador, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, Tunisia, Vanuatu, Viet Nam and Zambia, for a total of 114 sponsors.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution, having recalled resolution 52/7, takes note with appreciation of the resolutions adopted and activities carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union during the past year in support of United Nations actions in the fields of peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, democracy, gender issues and governance. Furthermore, in its operative part, it welcomes the initiative of the Inter-Parliamentary Union of holding a conference of presiding officers of national parliaments at United Nations Headquarters, in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly in 2000 proposed by the Secretary-General.

In this regard, I would recall that the Inter-Parliamentary Council, at its Conference at Windhoek, Namibia, in April this year, endorsed the proposal for such a conference. Subsequently, in September, the Council, at a meeting held in Moscow, took note of the United Nations Secretary-General's support for that conference and set as its objectives, first, that its participants should enjoy the opportunity to express their views on ways in which national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union can work with the United Nations in the new millennium; and secondly, that it should offer an opportunity to adopt a solemn act rededicating the Inter-Parliamentary Union. At that Moscow Conference, it was also agreed to establish a preparatory committee for the conference.

Furthermore, in operative paragraph 3, the Secretary-General is requested to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on various aspects of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, including information made available by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on preparations for the proposed conference. Lastly, in operative paragraph 4, it is decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

In conclusion, and given that the draft resolution I have just introduced has no financial implications for the programme budget, I wish to propose, on behalf of all 114 sponsors, that it be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Kier (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with my statement.

It is with great pleasure that I address the General Assembly on the item before us, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". May I also mention that today, for the first time, all 15 member States of the European Union will sponsor this draft resolution. The European Union is confident that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The draft resolution before us, which was introduced by the Permanent Representative of Spain, Ambassador Arias, strongly supports the further strengthening of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), especially in the fields of peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, democracy, gender issues and governance.

The European Union welcomes these developments, as parliaments are called on to play an ever-increasing role in international cooperation. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an ideal forum to connect both. The national parliaments representing their respective peoples have, *inter alia*, the responsibility of providing the necessary political and moral support for the manifold United Nations activities, as well as the funds for our world Organization, and are not least, therefore, in following its work with keen interest. For their part, the United Nations and, in particular, the General Assembly, while clearly intergovernmental, have to live up to the expectations of we, the peoples of the United Nations.

The task of facilitator taken by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, therefore, cannot be underestimated. It is the link between national parliaments and the General Assembly and thus contributes to making this natural partnership between the two, their mutual exchange of views and of information, even more valuable and effective. Therefore, the European Union strongly supports the efforts taken in a common attempt by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General to allow parliaments and civil society to play a greater role in the United Nations system.

I will briefly refer to the results achieved at both IPU Conferences held this year, which are, of course, of global relevance and therefore important for this General Assembly. At the Conference in Windhoek last April, the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted numerous resolutions of topical interest, among which, to mention just a few, were resolutions on foreign debt as a factor limiting the integration of the third world countries into the process of globalization and on the situation in Kosovo and measures to ensure a lasting and peaceful solution to the crisis.

Of particular relevance in view of the forthcoming commemorative meeting is the resolution adopted without a vote by the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Moscow last September on the strong action by national parliaments in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights in the twenty-first century.

Let me also briefly refer to the very valuable activities the United Nations Secretariat is conducting, through its Electoral Assistance Division and Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in the field of the organization, preparation and administration of elections, including follow-up and monitoring in many Member States. This is, of course, an activity in which there is a vast opportunity for increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

As the results of past conferences have shown, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been very actively involved in enriching the tasks carried out by the United Nations, adding the parliamentarian dimension, which will once again be confirmed at the conference of presiding officers of national parliaments at the United Nations in the year 2000. That conference will provide the participants with an opportunity to express their views on how national parliaments and several organizations, including the IPU, can work with the United Nations in the new millennium, and also provide an opportunity for the adoption of a solemn act of refounding the IPU.

In this context, I am very proud to mention on this solemn occasion that at the 100th Conference in Moscow, the Council adopted a report of the Executive Committee which included a proposal to constitute a Preparatory Committee for the Conference, composed of presiding officers of several national parliaments and several members of the Executive Committee. Two preparatory meetings are expected to take place in 1999: Austria will host the first one, which is to take place in Vienna from 22 to 23 February 1999; the second will be hosted by Morocco. The speakers of the Parliaments of Bangladesh and Romania have offered to host the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee in the early part of the year 2000.

I would like to conclude by reiterating full support for the action of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its increased cooperation with the United Nations. Let us hope that the ideal of democracy will be the guiding principle of parliamentarian and political actions in the new millennium.

Ms. Belhaj (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): In his report on the work of the Organization submitted to the General Assembly at its present session, Mr. Kofi Annan emphasizes that as part of the endeavour to invigorate the United Nations that he has undertaken with a view to providing a new impetus to the United Nations, he has made a particular effort to establish a mutually beneficial dialogue with the international business community. At the same time, the Secretary-General recalls that engagement with the business community parallels the long-standing and increasingly close working relationships the United Nations has with non-governmental organizations.

We particularly welcome the fact that that focus, which fits within the context of renewing the Organization in the post-war period, is accompanied by a policy aimed at consolidating the bonds of cooperation with regional organizations, or those with a global mission, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which currently brings together more than 130 national and regional parliaments.

The complementarity that the United Nations has developed through the links it has forged with specialized, regional and interregional organizations is aimed at providing reciprocal and mutually beneficial contributions. This positive exchange has been more fully crystallized in the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. That is not surprising, given that parliaments are the direct expression of the popular will and the living expression of civil society, and represent one of the driving forces of the new dynamic that the Secretary-General wants to instil in the Organization at the dawn of the twenty-first century. In this regard, the nature of the objectives and the convergence of views between the universal Organization and the intergovernmental organization account for the accomplishment of such important work, through cooperation, in such a short time. The positive progress in the complementarity between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union is best illustrated by developments in three areas. Whether in the promotion of representative democracy, activities to promote peace and security or the contribution to sustainable development, the praiseworthy work accomplished since the fifty-second session allows us to anticipate broad and promising cooperation.

The first issue that I would like to raise in this respect is the promotion of representative democracy, an area in which the Inter-Parliamentary Union has great expertise. In 1997 the Inter-Parliamentary Union prepared a study on the principles and results of democracy, which culminated in a Universal Declaration on Democracy. The Declaration sets out the fundamental principles of democracy and elaborates on the elements and standards that govern the exercise of democratic government. It also deals with the international dimension of democracy. That standard-setting work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union has served as a foundation for the work of the General Assembly to promote and consolidate new and re-established democracies.

In the context of the promotion of representative democracy, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has supported the efforts of the United Nations in giving assistance and aid to the parliaments of developing countries and of the newly independent States of Central Asia. In this connection, I should like to recall the meeting held in April 1998 in Harare by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). That meeting, in which the presiding officers of African parliaments participated, was primarily devoted to the contribution of parliaments to democracy in Africa.

In the same context, one of the central themes of the Union's activity relates to the promotion of the participation of women in political life, particularly at the decision-making level. In addition to its action to promote the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women at the national level, the Union is developing, in cooperation with the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Division for the Advancement of Women, numerous activities for the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The attention being focused on promoting partnership between men and women is accompanied by continued support for the promotion and protection of all human rights. This was evident in, *inter alia*, the resolutions adopted by the Union in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The participation of the Union in the work of the Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of an International Criminal Court also enabled it to support the setting up of that institution, an effective means of defending the State based on the rule of law.

The maintenance of peace and security is also a high-priority area for cooperation between the Union and the United Nations. The Chamber of Deputies of Tunisia attaches particular interest to that aspect of cooperation between the two organizations, particularly since in the post-cold-war period Africa has been beset by bloody conflicts and torn apart in unprecedented ways. In this respect, I should like to refer to the resolution adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in April 1998 in Windhoek, which expresses the support of the parliamentarians for the United Nations in strengthening the Organization's prevention and early warning mechanisms.

In addition to promoting democracy, the parliamentarians can demonstrate their boldness and imagination in supporting United Nations efforts to promote peace and security. In this connection, we recall the work taken up by the parliamentarians to support the efforts of the United Nations for a total ban on the use of anti-personnel mines. Also, in the Mediterranean region, to which my country belongs, we can refer to the measures undertaken by the Union to support the United Nations in its work of bringing about peace and intercommunal reconciliation in Cyprus. In the same spirit, the representatives of legislative power have institutionalized the inter-parliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Still in the area of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I should also like to hail the Union's commitment to provide firm and specific support for major United Nations conferences, in particular in implementing measures on sustainable development.

Without a doubt, the Union's activities as a whole represent a valuable contribution to the culture of tolerance and to ensuring that values of peace and solidarity among nations take deep root. In this way the Inter-Parliamentary Union is contributing to the dissemination of universal values and principles.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union in this way has contributed to the construction of the bridge between the Dow Jones index and the human development index, as the Secretary-General put it in his report. In the year 2000 a conference of speakers of national parliaments will be held at the United Nations during the Millennium Assembly. That meeting will renew the Union's support of the universal Organization and will also, we are convinced, be able to respond to the Secretary-General's appeal by enriching thinking on the form the Organization will take in the twenty-first century.

Ms. Heptulla (India): We compliment the Secretary-General for the concise but comprehensive document we have before us outlining the intensification and deepening of the cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations. I consider it a great privilege to speak in support of this cooperation, having been closely associated with it ever since its inception in 1996. The ideals of development, democracy and peace, to which our Union is committed, are fully shared by the United Nations and provide a firm basis for strengthened and enhanced linkages and mutually beneficial cooperation. We need to pool our resources and our experiences to devise common plans of action so as to address the challenges facing the world.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union includes representatives of people untrammelled by their affiliations to a particular political ideology or belief. They come from both Governments and opposition, giving a unique flavour to our deliberations. The IPU thus represents, better than many other forums, the diverse will of the people and, in the true sense of the term, the plurality of humankind.

The possibilities of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union are enormous. We have noted with great satisfaction the concrete examples of United Nations-IPU cooperation detailed in the Secretary General's report. Last year, speaking on this agenda item, my delegation had pointed out that promotion of democracy at all levels was a key area in which the experience of the IPU could be effectively utilized by the United Nations and its specialized agencies

or funds and programmes. We are happy to note that the report mentions it as a field of particularly close cooperation between the two organizations. That the IPU has participated not only in normative work, promoting a better understanding of democracy, but has also been closely involved in several field-level institution-building projects, is a matter of some satisfaction. We would like especially to mention the support extended by the IPU, through the United Nations, in the provision of advisory services and technical assistance to parliaments, either as a part of international efforts for resolution of conflicts or at the direct request of the parliament concerned. The meeting jointly organized in Harare in April this year by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to identify the contributions that parliaments can make to democracy in Africa and to the mechanisms for strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation on the continent, was an extremely important step. We look forward to the conclusion in the near future of a multi-year parliamentary support programme between the IPU and UNDP.

Full participation of women in all aspects of economic and social life of our peoples and their political empowerment is one of the guarantees of democracy which has also been recognized fully and supported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As a country committed to social uplift, India has enacted significant socially emancipating legislation, including the reservation of one third of seats in locally elected district, municipal and village-level bodies, the panchayats, through constitutional amendments. They have brought to the fore a critical body of women, more than a million strong, which is now taking charge not only of the welfare of their families but of entire communities. UNDP had the opportunity to recognize one of them, two weeks ago here in New York, through its poverty eradication award. We therefore strongly support the meeting of representatives of parliaments, Governments and international agencies that is planned to be held on the occasion of the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. We also look forward to the event to be jointly convened in December 1999 by the IPU, the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, at which an equal number of women and men representatives of Governments, parliaments and various sectors of society will study women's input into and impact on the democratic process. We hope that these joint efforts will lend their weight to the achievement of a goal we all share: achieving equality of women and men in politics, in decision-making and in all other realms of human endeavour.

Since last year, the United Nations has embarked on an ambitious programme of reform and revitalization of its constituent parts. We welcome this, as a vibrant, effective, democratic and responsive United Nations that fully reflects the aspirations and desires of the vast majority of its membership would significantly enhance the content, scope and quality of cooperation between it and the IPU. However, as we have noted before, even a rejuvenated system will not succeed if the resources needed to fully implement its mandates are not made available. It is even more serious to note, from various other reports before this session of the General Assembly, that the financial situation continues to be grim and the Organization remains strapped for cash. Obviously, the bankruptcy or even chronic poverty of the United Nations will have an adverse impact on its activities, including cooperation with the IPU. In our view, the Inter-Parliamentary Union can play a role in redressing this situation by mobilizing the necessary political will to support the United Nations.

Similarly, the IPU can work to guarantee renewed political interest in promoting multilateral development cooperation through the United Nations. It is distressing to observe the steady decrease in the funding of operational activities of the United Nations. We, as parliamentarians, reflect the will of the people of the nations and can work together to ensure the required political will for placing the funding of the United Nations system's operational activities for development on a sound footing. After all, the role of the United Nations in the development of developing countries and its impact on the lives of our citizens constitute the only touchstone on which we will judge the efficiency of the Organization.

As we move inexorably towards the new millennium, we must consider the emerging dimensions and vistas of cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations. The conference of speakers of national parliaments to be organized at the United Nations during the Millennium Assembly is one such event. We must work towards ensuring its success. In our view, the IPU and United Nations should together ensure that the Millennium Assembly is well prepared and that it identifies effective goals for the Organization in the coming millennium while providing the means to achieve them. An obvious goal would be increasing the role of the United Nations in development, *inter alia*, through the promotion of South-South cooperation.

The United Nations and the IPU must also work simultaneously for the sharing of information and knowledge and for the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries so as to bridge the widening gap between them, and to reduce tension and pave the way for growth, peace and better understanding for all humankind.

Another issue of concern to the international community that must be dealt with in the context of the Millennium Assembly is that of weapons of mass destruction. By the twenty-first century, both the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects will hopefully have received universal or near-universal ratification. Those weapons of mass destruction have been outlawed, but very little progress has been made on the last remaining weapons of mass destruction: nuclear weapons. We should enter into negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention eliminating all nuclear weapons. Adoption of such a convention at the Millennium Assembly would be a crowning glory of the United Nations in the next millennium. We hope that the international community will rise to this challenge.

To conclude, may I once again express my delegation's happiness at the growing cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations. I trust that this cooperation will be further intensified and deepened in coming years. India will be willing to play its part in this process, in the belief that it is not only our endeavour and commitment, but also our duty, to create a better and more prosperous global society through strengthened international cooperation for development. It is with this faith that I commend to the Assembly for unanimous adoption draft resolution A/53/L.12, which has been sponsored by a large number of delegations, including that of India.

Mr. El Daly (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure, as the representative of the Egyptian parliamentary group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. My congratulations go also to your friendly country, Uruguay. I am confident that you will guide the Assembly's work at this session with effectiveness and ability. I convey my congratulations also to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, President of the Assembly at its fifty-second session, on the fine way in which he guided the work of the Assembly.

I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The report outlines many aspects of the cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, including conflict prevention, security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, support for democracy and sustainable social and economic development, follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, human rights issues and the increasingly important question of globalization.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Here we should like to refer to the conclusions of the 161st session of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, held at Cairo on 16 September 1997, and to a number of Economic and Social Council documents of July 1998, which set out facets of the cooperation between the two organizations and highlighted the many endeavours of the IPU that in turn bolster United Nations efforts on important international issues.

The Egyptian parliamentary group wishes to reaffirm its full support for cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. That support is reflected in my delegation's having supported the inclusion of this item in the agenda of the General Assembly, and in its having joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.12 on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU.

In recent years, the United Nations has been the target of much criticism for the way in which it addresses numerous international issues because of the varying standards it applies. This has given rise to widespread accusations that the Organization applies a double standard. For parliaments and for peoples, this calls into question the credibility of the international Organization.

The Egyptian parliamentary group wishes to highlight a number of the challenges facing the international Organization — for which we, as parliamentarians and government officials, must find appropriate ways to address. The first of these is nuclear proliferation. With regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the question of proliferation is at the forefront of the serious issues posing a threat to international peace and security. Hence the need for all States to abide by the provisions of the

NPT and to accede to the Treaty with a view to achieving its universality and to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The position of the United Nations on this issue is marked by an obvious deficiency. In its resolution 687 (1991), by which it established the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to verify that Iraq possesses no weapons of mass destruction, the Security Council entrusted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the task of assisting UNSCOM in verification and in the inspection of the sites of such weapons. Paragraph 14 of that resolution indicates that the actions to be taken by Iraq to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction represent a step towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from such weapons. Nonetheless, calls to use the provisions of that paragraph to subject Israeli nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards and to secure Israel's accession to the NPT have not met with enthusiasm either in the Security Council or in other relevant United Nations bodies. This diminishes the Organization's credibility in the eyes of Member States.

In this context, recent developments point up the deficiency of the nuclear non-proliferation regime; this highlights the urgent need to find serious ways of redressing the shortcomings of that regime and enhancing its effectiveness, while avoiding the policy of double standards in this important sphere.

Believing in the importance of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear disarmament, Egypt has over the past 30 years called for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Then in 1990 it took another initiative calling for freeing the Middle East region from all weapons of mass destruction. We parliamentarians in Egypt emphasize and support this call, which has become a pressing popular quest.

Along with seven other Member States, Egypt also called for the elaboration of a new agenda to revive international commitment to bring about a world free from weapons of mass destruction. We hope that this agenda will command increasing international support to curb the risks posed by these weapons.

Secondly, the Middle East peace process has stagnated for about two years now due to the negative changes in the policies of Israel, represented by its refusal to comply with the principles underpinning the peace process agreed at Madrid and Oslo. Foremost among these principles is the principle of land for peace as a basis for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. We hope that the agreement signed on 23 October in Washington will represent a positive turning point in the stance of the Israeli Government. We hope also that that Government will be serious about implementing the agreement so that the peace process can be restarted, including the two Lebanese and Syrian tracks, and so that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace can reign supreme in the Middle East region.

In this connection, the Egyptian Parliamentary Group would like to express its full support for the effective role to be played by the United Nations to achieve this lofty goal and to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, from which the Middle East region suffered previously.

Thirdly, the Egyptian Parliamentary Group supports the efforts of the United Nations to eradicate international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the pursuit and punishment of its perpetrators. It also calls for enhancing the effectiveness of the relevant bodies of the Organization so they can combat terrorism and those who support it, and contain their sources of financing wherever they may be located. It is also important that States that shelter terrorists on many pretexts, including human rights and religious persecution — matters to which Egypt, as a Government and as a people, attaches special attention and importance — should desist from this practice and realize the gravity of this matter, which endangers all States of the world.

In this context, the Egyptian Parliamentary Group would like to emphasize the need to mobilize official international and popular support for the initiative taken by President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, the President of Egypt, to hold an international conference to combat terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations in 1999.

Fourthly, many States are subjected to sanctions in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Those sanctions, which are the result of specific circumstances, are designed to achieve the commitment by those States that violate international legitimacy to return to the general framework established by the international community in order to preserve international peace and security. Hence it is natural that sanctions and embargoes must be lifted from certain States, such as Iraq and Libya, as soon as they abide by Security Council resolutions. It is also important to conduct a comprehensive review of the current sanctions regimes.

Fifthly, with regard to the Lockerbie question, which resulted in the imposition of sanctions on Libya, a positive move by the parties to the conflict to settle this problem has become a pressing matter dictated by requirements of security and stability. Hence we call on all concerned parties to demonstrate further flexibility and to start trying the suspects in accordance with the guarantees and conventions agreed to by the parties concerned in order to achieve the long-awaited solution to that problem.

Sixthly, the new international system has brought about many new phenomena that have affected developing countries. With respect to the phenomenon of globalization, despite the fact that some developing countries have achieved the requisite integration into the international economy through fostering their competitive abilities and trade openness to the world, it is regrettable that certain developed countries have placed tariff barriers to the basic exports of the developing countries. This greatly constrains the ability of the developing countries to access Western markets and reap the fruits of globalization, which must benefit all States without exception. The Egyptian Parliamentary Group calls for a more equitable universal trading system based on the scrupulous application of international conventions.

Having presented some of the challenges facing this international Organization and ideas to resolve some of the problems that give rise to tension and instability in the international community, I hope we can cooperate in reaching appropriate solutions to those problems as well as others so that they will not become chronic and intractable and thus further burden our international Organization. We hope that the United Nations will devote its full attention to international cooperation issues calling for the pooling of efforts, such as issues of development in all its aspects, the conservation of the environment and the quest for peace, stability and security, which we are all working to foster.

In order for the United Nations to achieve the noble aims I referred to earlier, we call on the Member States that are indebted to the Organization to pay their arrears as soon as possible. This will enable the Organization to implement the programmes and activities entrusted to it. The Member States should also pay their contributions to the budget of the Organization in full, on time and without conditions, and fulfil their legal obligations in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter.

Mr. Saliba (Malta): As this is the first time that I am addressing the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, I should like to take the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election and on the able manner in which he is conducting our work.

Having read the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between this Organization and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), I note with satisfaction that much progress has been achieved. My country welcomes the practical measures already taken, such as the establishment of the Union's liaison office in New York earlier this year. Increasing cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the various organizations of the United Nations system is another very important step forward, and we hope that this cooperation will be widened and strengthened in future.

We also look forward to the planned IPU conference of speakers of national parliaments in the year 2000 in the context of the Millennium Assembly.

The IPU has been very active in the promotion of democracy. The adoption of the Universal Declaration on Democracy, which we strongly support, is an important and significant Declaration. The consolidation of the democratic process, with all that it entails, is a major step forward towards the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

My delegation believes that that Declaration underscores the relevance of the initiatives that the IPU has taken on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In his address during the general debate, my Deputy Prime Minister stated in reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

> "There is, however, a significant lack in this Declaration. It is an instrument with no judicial mechanisms or sanctions. Has the time arrived to learn from the experience of the regional human rights conventions, in particular the European Convention, which through its mechanisms instituted the European Court of Human Rights and through the right of individual petition further guarantees a judicial process aimed at ensuring effective enforcement?" (*A/53/PV.19*)

The cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as other initiatives of the IPU in this field, would therefore be fulfilled if the IPU could study ways in which national parliaments can cooperate and work towards creating such a mechanism.

Within the IPU, Malta has consistently and insistently worked to raise awareness of the importance of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. We note with satisfaction that this item is given the importance that it merits. We look forward to the third IPU conference on all issues covered by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean.

We also note the IPU's increasing interest in gender issues. Unfortunately, women have always been the ones that have benefited least from the exercise of individual human rights. Greater participation in national parliaments by women should certainly provide an important impetus for changing this state of affairs. Our last national elections, held in September of this year, resulted in an increased number of women in our Parliament. While the proportion is still low, these results show increasing participation by women in the decision-making processes in my country.

The establishment of local councils and the participation of women in these councils, we believe, has led to the increased representation of women in our Parliament.

May I conclude by thanking the Secretary-General of the IPU for his intervention. Malta's commitment to the IPU remains firm. We are proud to be among the large number of countries that have sponsored the draft resolution before the Assembly.

Mr. Aleskerov (Azerbaijan) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is a great honour for me to address such a representative and eminent audience. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to link the subject we are discussing today to the events that are taking place in our country.

Since restoring its independence, Azerbaijan has embarked on building a secular, democratic State based on the rule of law and with a market economy. In its foreign policy, Azerbaijan — having ruled out the option of safeguarding its own interests at the expense of others — is developing its relations with all countries on the basis of peaceful coexistence, the balance of interests, good neighbourliness, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in one another's internal affairs.

Since its independence, Azerbaijan has become a member of numerous international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and a number of others. Participation in the work of these organizations is extremely useful for young States that are pursuing democratic reforms. We are studying other States' experiences and directing our efforts towards bringing our legislation in line with the international legal norms and standards. A vivid example of this policy is the abolition of the death penalty in Azerbaijan, an event without precedent throughout the East.

The democratization of political life has created a solid basis for the functioning of a free and multi-party system. Today there are more than 30 political parties active in Azerbaijan. The number of mass media organizations has greatly increased, and more than 500 of them are now registered in Azerbaijan.

The Government has created all the necessary conditions for the free development of the human rights movement. To strengthen the legal human rights instruments, on 22 February this year, the head of State, Mr. Heydar Aliyev, issued an edict on measures to ensure the freedoms and rights of citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic.

In terms of domestic policy, the Government is unequivocally seeking the democratization of the political system and the liberalization of the economy. The Constitution that was adopted in 1995 through a country-wide referendum fully guarantees citizens' political, economic, social, religious and cultural rights and freedoms. In 1995, for the first time in the history of Azerbaijan, democratic parliamentary elections were conducted on the basis of a multi-party system. The deputies in our Parliament represent nine political parties, of which four are opposition parties. In early October this year, presidential elections took place in Azerbaijan. There were six presidential candidates. As was expected, Mr. Heydar Aliyev won a resounding victory.

Last year, within the framework of the reform of the judiciary, the legislature of the country adopted two important laws: the act on courts and judges and the act on the constitutional court. Laws on local self-government, municipal-council elections, the bar, the prosecutor's office, the police and other matters are about to be adopted.

Definite success has also been achieved in building a free and socially oriented market economy. The inflow of foreign investments, growth of foreign trade, entering into oil contracts, successfully privatizing small

enterprises and agrarian reform have revitalized the economy.

Returning to the subject of cooperation with international organizations, I would like to express our satisfaction at the fact that other former Republics of the Soviet Union, in particular the Republic of Armenia, have also become members of these organizations. It is my hope that the participation of our countries in the global and pan-European structures will help us find a way to settle our bilateral problems. In this connection, with an eye to our regional problems, I would like to mention in particular the importance of implementing the principles set forth in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act concerning the inviolability of borders and the territorial integrity of States.

It is also my conviction that cooperation between international organizations is necessary in order to solve a whole gamut of problems that arise during regional conflicts, above all those relating to the fight against terrorism and the prevention of illegal arms transfers, which directly affect our region.

Not wishing to tax the Assembly's patience, I will not dwell at length on our internal problems, the most important of them being the problem in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Let me just say that despite the four United Nations resolutions — the first of which was adopted as far back as 1993 — demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and despite the decisions of the 1996 Lisbon summit, today 20 per cent of our territory still remains occupied by that neighbouring country, and out of the 7.5 million people of Azerbaijan, more than 1 million are refugees and internally displaced persons. Nevertheless, we are determined to continue to seek a peaceful settlement of the conflict, while firmly defending our territorial integrity. That is why the support of international organizations in this matter is extremely important to us. We must not allow the emergence in international relations of a precedent of the violation of the territorial integrity of States or of their dismemberment due to glaring failures to comply with international norms.

As for the item under discussion, Azerbaijan welcomes close cooperation between international organizations, in this case the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations. We believe that such cooperation will contribute to ensuring the broad participation of all States in strengthening peace and cooperation, in particular by supporting the goals of the United Nations.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union should be considered an imperative of the times, as reaffirmed by the ever-increasing interaction of these two organizations and reflected in the 1996 cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and in General Assembly resolution 52/7.

In recent years, cooperation between the two organizations has been significantly stepped up, with special focus on such areas as the strengthening of democracy, respect for human rights, ensuring peace and security, economic and social development and so forth.

We welcome the continuing development of links between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which should take concrete form for practical interaction at the conference of speakers of national parliaments to be held in the year 2000 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*interpretation from French*): Today we will be adopting a draft resolution concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which, among other things, welcomes the IPU's initiative to hold a meeting of speakers of national parliaments at United Nations Headquarters during the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000. My country, which has one of the oldest parliaments in Europe — the General Council, founded in 1419 — welcomes that happy event. At a time when media images are so important, the symbolism of the two branches of power — the legislative and the executive — coming together at the threshold of the third millennium to reaffirm their commitment to the Organization in which the hopes of the peoples of the world are vested will undoubtedly provide a powerful boost to the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

In a time when globalization is an unavoidable reality in every corner of the world; when economies miles apart suffer together the effects of a localized crisis; when the inhabitants of Ulan Bator can discuss current events via the Internet with those in Andorra la Vella, Buenos Aires or in Cape Town; and when the clothes we wear, the food we eat or the books we read are not from our neighbouring regions but from the global community that humanity is fast becoming — in this time of acute complexity in international economic and political relations, Governments of sovereign States

have had to absorb a profusion of new information and set up structures prepared to cope with the new global village. Parliaments are also following this path and are having to adapt their information-gathering methods as well as, sometimes, their traditional day-to-day relationship with the respective executive branches of government.

The President returned to the Chair.

In expressing the will of the people who freely elect them, parliamentarians in representative democratic societies must, within the salutary separation of powers that keeps alive the philosophy of checks and balances, have at their disposal advanced tools and information to cope with the new, interdependent world in which we live. The Inter-Parliamentary Union definitely provides a way for parliaments of the world to know each other better and to interact and learn from each other's experiences. An increased presence and voice of the IPU at the United Nations will give our parliaments the necessary information to respond back home to the challenges this Organization faces, especially in this time of reform.

The United Nations, suffers from a lack of exposure. We sometimes appear too remote, in our daily work by the East River of New York, for a continuous evaluation of and response to our actions by parliaments under our national jurisdictions.

The yearly visit to United Nations Headquarters organized by the IPU is therefore an excellent initiative that we must encourage. Since the beginning of this auspicious cooperation between the United Nations and IPU, Andorran members of parliament, from all parties, have attended these meetings, thus asserting the commitment of our country to the enhanced transparency necessary for the future health of the Organization.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The Principality of Andorra has supported unambiguously the draft resolution we are about to adopt on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. During the process of enlisting sponsors for this draft resolution, led with great success by our neighbour, Spain, our delegation worked actively to ensure that its acceptance would be as broad as possible.

Today we commend those who are working steadily to intensify cooperation between Governments and parliaments in the international arena of the United Nations. In particular, we commend Mr. Miguel Angel Martínez, who, with his good humour and tireless optimism, firmly leads the way for the IPU; Mr. Pierre Cornillon, who guided the early stages of United Nations-IPU cooperation; and his successor, Mr. Anders B.Johnsson, who has reaffirmed his organization's keen desire to be increasingly present in New York. They may always rely on Andorra's support.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): International organizations, too, have to adapt to a changing world. My Government welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to adapt the United Nations to a new global alliance of Governments, civil society and, not least, parliamentarians.

The cooperation agreement signed in 1996 between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) provides parliaments with an opportunity to become more actively involved in the work of the United Nations. It is our opinion that adding a parliamentary dimension to the planning of future work in the United Nations might not only benefit the activities of the Organization, but might also enhance the understanding of the United Nations principles, as well as the relevance of United Nations decisions.

Moreover, many of today's political issues cannot be confined to a particular country. Parliaments and parliamentarians the world over need to complement their traditional national perspectives with an international outlook.

The report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU indicates that the framework agreement is being fulfilled with substantive and important activities. The IPU's support in areas such as conflict prevention, human rights and promotion of representative democracy has increased the effectiveness and relevance of United Nations activities in these areas.

In particular, I would like to commend the IPU for valuable technical support provided to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its effort to promote democracy and strengthen democratic institutions in developing countries Indeed, support for democratic processes is key to the United Nations in fulfilling its mandate within the areas of peace and security and economic development.

The United Nations agenda includes some of the urgent concerns of the day. During this year's session of the General Assembly, the issue of an evolving single global economy has been debated. The current world

economic crisis clearly illustrates that we are far from understanding the powerful forces of globalization. Furthermore, it is evident that the multilateral system handling the current global economic instability needs to be strengthened. It is the view of my Government that the time has come to rethink the role of existing international institutions in this regard. There is also an urgent need for innovative measures to influence speculative activities in the financial markets.

It is the view of my Government that the immediate challenges in dealing with the financial turmoil are important. However, this should not entail a reduced focus on long-term development efforts in low-income countries.

Furthermore, there are financial crises that hardly reach the headlines: those that are caused by the severe debt burden of many of the poorest countries. My Government recently presented a comprehensive debt-relief strategy for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries. The strategy provides for unilateral Norwegian debt forgiveness, on top of multilaterally agreed debt relief, in cases in which a credible exit solution has been established. We encourage other creditor countries to put in place similar arrangements.

The United Nations should be at the centre of various processes dealing with globalization issues and should, in this regard, be able to draw upon the resources and expertise of all concerned parties. My Government invites parliamentarians and the IPU to join forces with the United Nations and others in an effort to maximize the positive effects of globalization while minimizing the negative aspects.

The Conference of speakers of national parliaments in the year 2000 will provide parliamentary support to the United Nations Millennium Assembly, at which the issue of globalization undoubtedly will be an important issue.

Mr. Shahid (Bangladesh): I have had the privilege of participating in different events organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). I have great admiration for the work done by the organization. It provides a very useful forum for parliamentarians to exchange ideas and benefit from dialogue on issues of relevance to the entire world community. Parliaments of different countries work together at the international level through the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Much work done by the Inter-Parliamentary Union has relevance to the United Nations. The IPU's contributions to such issues as peace and security, democracy, development, human rights and gender equality complement and support the work of the United Nations on these issues. That is why it is all the more important that the IPU have excellent cooperation and working relations with the United Nations.

We are happy to note that, ever since the conclusion of a cooperation agreement in 1996 between the IPU and the United Nations, there has been increasing interaction between these two organizations. The opening of the IPU Liaison Office in New York in March this year greatly facilitated the process. The IPU's annual meetings at the United Nations, like the one we had last Monday, are also very useful in furthering our understanding of the issues taken up by the General Assembly.

I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations. He has identified the major fields in which cooperation has been most productive.

We feel encouraged by the supportive role of the IPU for activities of the United Nations to promote global peace and security, in particular, its role in the prevention of conflicts and its efforts to secure a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines.

In the area of promotion of representative democracy, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has developed considerable expertise. The Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the IPU in 1997 summarizes, in a nutshell, the elements and standards of democracy. The United Nations can benefit from the experience of the IPU in institution-building through advisory services and technical assistance to national parliaments and the promotion of inter-parliamentary cooperation. The IPU can also contribute effectively to integrating a gender perspective in the United Nations work on better governance and increased and effective representation of women in politics and decision-making.

The two organizations should also look for ways and means to increase further their cooperation in the field of human rights. One issue on which there could effective cooperation is national implementation of international human rights mechanisms. As legislators, the parliamentarians have a key role to play in this regard. Another issue on which cooperation would be useful is the promotion of the right to development.

Sustainable economic and social development is an area in which there could be effective cooperation between the IPU and United Nations agencies. We welcome the specialized inter-parliamentary conference on the issue of attaining objectives of the World Food Summit through a sustainable development strategy, to be held from 29 November to 2 December 1998. It marks further cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations.

We also welcome the proposed tripartite meeting of representatives of parliaments, Governments and intergovernmental organizations to review the progress made in implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. This will provide parliamentarians an opportunity to have a clear idea of objectives attained and the work yet to be done.

Let me, in conclusion, mention that, as we prepare for the next millennium, continuing cooperation between the two organizations would help us find ways to address the challenges at hand. In this context, we believe that the proposed IPU conference of speakers of national parliaments in the year 2000 is a welcome initiative. It will be all the more useful as it is intended to be held with the objective of providing parliamentary support to the proposed Millennium Assembly to be convened by the United Nations.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): Allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Kazakhstan, to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the report he has prepared on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

I should also like to thank Mr. Inocencio Arias, the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, for introducing draft resolution A/53/L.12, of which Kazakhstan is a sponsor.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the progress achieved in strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union since the signing on 24 June 1996 of the cooperation agreement between the two organizations. The information given in the report of the Secretary-General on concrete steps and actions taken in the context of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU provides evidence of this progress. In this connection, the delegation of Kazakhstan fully supports the positive developments in interrelations between the United Nations and the IPU, which were noted by the parliamentarians during the Conferences of the IPU held this year in Windhoek and Moscow.

We also support the measures undertaken by the IPU, in close cooperation with the United Nations, aimed at the promotion of peace and security, sustainable development, observance of human rights, good governance and representative democracy. The joint and mutually supportive activity of the two organizations is a striking example of the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and civil society.

The IPU, whose membership encompasses the parliaments of 137 countries of the world, possesses great potential for providing technical assistance and advisory services to national parliaments. The close cooperation of the IPU with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and other organizations is becoming substantial. The concept of cooperation between parliaments and Governments at the international level, set forth in the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU, is being further developed. This was considerably facilitated by the opening in March 1998 of the IPU Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York.

A positive impetus to the active participation of civil society in international activity will in our view be provided by the holding in the year 2000 of the conference of speakers of national parliaments. As the report of the Secretary-General indicates, this initiative is intended to be held in conjunction with, and to provide parliamentary support to, the proposed Millennium Assembly to be convened by the United Nations in September 2000.

Since becoming a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Kazakhstan has regularly taken an active part in all the conferences, forums and other activities conducted within the framework of the IPU and its committees. The Chairman of the Senate of Kazakhstan's Parliament participated in the work of the 97th IPU Conference as head of the delegation of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Members of Kazakhstan's Parliament participated in the specialized IPU Conference on education, science, culture and communications in Paris, the Conference on partnership between men and women in politics in New Delhi, the forum of parliamentarians in New York, and the international seminar, entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in

Central Asia and Kazakhstan", which was organized jointly by the IPU and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Evidence of Kazakhstan's growing authority in the Inter-Parliamentary Union was the election of the Chairman of the Committee on Environmental Issues and Utilization of Nature of the Majlis — the Assembly of our Parliament — to membership in the Committee for Sustainable Development at the 97th IPU Conference in Seoul. Another representative from Kazakhstan's Parliament was elected regional representative of the Group of Central and Eastern European countries in the elections for the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians at the IPU Conference in Moscow.

The political and economic reforms under way in Kazakhstan are promoting the strengthening of our cooperation with the IPU. From the podium of the Union's international forums, our parliamentarians have more than once declared Kazakhstan's intention of continuing its progressive movement towards a market economy and a democratic society, giving real content to the rights and freedoms of citizens. The Inter-Parliamentary Union welcomed the information that Kazakhstan is a party to 18 multilateral treaties in the field of human rights, including the United Nations Conventions against torture, on the elimination of racial discrimination, on the prevention of the crime of genocide and on the elimination of discrimination against women, all of which it ratified in 1998.

In statements at the Union's conferences and in its committees, the delegation of Kazakhstan, in emphasizing the important role of parliamentarians in promoting the solution of the urgent problems of maintaining peace and international security and of economic and social development, constantly stresses the critical situation of the regions of the Aral Sea and the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground and the need for emergency measures to save them from extremely severe environmental crisis.

One of the important areas in which the United Nations is cooperating closely with the IPU is the promotion of representative democracy. In this connection, I should like to note that Kazakhstan's leadership is currently taking steps to build a democratic State ruled by law and that this will undoubtedly promote a strengthening of Kazakhstan's cooperation with the IPU.

On 30 September this year the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, in his address to the people, proposed a broad programme for the democratization of the country's political system, including, together with other measures, a clear-cut interaction between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of power; a considerable increase in the role of the bicameral Parliament and of political parties; strengthening of the responsibility of the Government; and strengthening of the judicial system. Accordingly, a bill on the introduction of amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan was submitted to Parliament and was adopted on 7 October after prolonged discussions in Parliament. The adoption of this Act was preceded by intensive work in the committees of both houses of Kazakhstan's Parliament, the Senate and the Majlis.

Under the terms of the Act, in order to ensure the all-round participation of Kazakhstan's political parties in elections, to give citizens a chance of becoming full-fledged participants in the political process and to bring representatives of the political parties into the membership of the lower house of Parliament, the Majlis, provision has been made for an increase in its membership to 77 deputies.

To match the increase in the size of the Majlis, the number of members of the upper house of Parliament, the Senate, is also being increased. To ensure the stability of State power, the term of office of deputies in the Majlis is being increased to five years, and the term of deputies in the Senate to six.

The new wording of the Constitution, along with other additions and amendments, also provides for such democratic standards as the establishment of a mixed majority; proportional system for elections to Parliament; the elimination of the requirement for more than 50 per cent of electors to take part in the elections; the implementation of a number of measures to strengthen parliamentary control over the work of members of the Government; the introduction of a jury system and the approval of democratic standards in the activity of the Supreme Judicial Council; and the possibility of electing the leaders of local executive bodies.

In recognition of the growing role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in carrying on the activity of the United Nations, and again confirming Kazakhstan's devotion to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Organization, I should like to express our conviction

that the further fruitful and effective cooperation between national parliaments at the international level within the IPU will play a significant role in achieving the purposes of the United Nations.

My delegation is convinced that the adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.12, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", which is before us for consideration today, will serve to further advance and strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU.

Allow me, in this connection, to express the hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Ibrahim (Indonesia): It is indeed a great privilege for my delegation to speak in support of cooperation between the between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Such cooperation between the IPU, which represents the core of a nation — its people — and the United Nations, whose membership consists of States, should be seen as an imperative necessity.

We are coming to the end of this millennium during which we welcomed the end of the cold war with great expectations as we saw the potential for the creation of a more stable and secure world order and globalized prosperity. To our dismay and disappointment, however, on the eve of a new century, we find that we have fallen short of those lofty expectations, and a world disorder characterized by numerous conflicts and unbearable suffering has persisted in many parts of the world. Furthermore, the awesome force of globalization, propelled by science and technology, instead of serving to unify humankind in a decisive assault against the persistent, systemic problems of our time, is being used to press the advantage of the strong over the weak, thereby widening the gap between the developed and the developing world. Further compounding the situation is the world economy, which is on the brink of recession in the developed and developing countries alike. It is against the background of these hard and undeniable realities that cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations, each with its uniqueness and characteristics, should be further enhanced. In this context, it is gratifying to note from the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/458 that during the past year the two organizations undertook several joint and mutually reinforcing actions in various areas.

Still, the possibilities for enhanced cooperation between them are considerable. Specific areas have been identified in the report and deserve our serious consideration — especially our cooperation for the promotion of peace and security, representative democracy and sustainable economic and social development. One modality to achieve these objectives would be to follow up on major United Nations conferences and summits and to implement their conclusions and recommendations.

Our approach to the twenty-first century calls for mutually beneficial cooperation among States based on dialogue and negotiations. The channels of deliberations between the developed and developing countries need to be revived. The international community should renew its commitment to the Agenda for Development and respond more effectively to the important issues relating to socio-economic progress. Although initially such an approach would seem to benefit the developing countries, in the long run, positive changes in the welfare of the peoples in developing countries will be in the best interest of the international community as a whole.

Dialogue and negotiations are crucial to the realization of our common interests. Striving for democratization based on universal principles and implementing change at the national level on the basis of a country's cultural background and level of advancement are vital to ensure smooth development for the people's welfare. In adopting such approaches, the United Nations can provide the forum within the framework of a paradigm of equal participation and representation of United Nations Member States, as well as among United Nations agencies themselves.

Intensified cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU is essential for an effective, vibrant, modern and reformed United Nations which is responsive to the concerns of the vast majority of its Members — the developing countries. Indonesia therefore supports the recent proposals and measures that the international community is considering to revitalize and further strengthen the Organization. However, reforms cannot be a substitute for the provision of adequate resources to the United Nations to carry out its mandated tasks. They cannot constitute simply a cost-cutting exercise. In this context, my delegation recalls that numerous conferences of the Inter-Parliamentary Union have called on the international community to provide the United Nations with requisite financial, human and technical resources.

We have high hopes that these appeals will be met in the not-too-distant future.

In conclusion, may I express my delegation's satisfaction at the present stage of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It is our expectation that this cooperation will be further intensified and strengthened in the coming years. May I assure the Assembly that Indonesia will be more than willing to play its part in the process. It is in this context that my delegation would like to commend to the Assembly the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.12.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) *(interpretation from Spanish):* Sometimes in the General Assembly we encounter topics of great importance that do not receive all the political attention or attention of public opinion outside of this Hall that they deserve. This meeting is an example of this.

For this reason I wanted to be here in person to express on behalf of the Government of Chile and of all the political parties represented in the National Congress our unreserved support for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

For several years, many of us in the United Nations have felt that relations with the IPU should be much closer; indeed, we feel that the Inter-Parliamentary Union deserves special status in keeping with its position as the only world organization of parliaments that represents not only parliamentarians but also the parliamentary institutions that are established by our respective constitutions.

Since William Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy, both of them Nobel peace prize laureates, conceived it in 1889, this visionary initiative has grown to represent more than 100 democratically elected national parliaments. Politically speaking, it represents thousands and thousands of parliamentarians backed by millions and millions of freely cast votes. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an extraordinary fount of democratic representation.

We in the General Assembly are rightly proud that the Charter was signed on behalf of "We, the peoples of the United Nations". But we must recognize that, wherever political circumstances permit, those peoples vote year after year in every corner of the world to elect their representatives to national parliaments. In that light, let me make a straightforward but, in my view, key statement: the United Nations cannot treat the Inter-Parliamentary Union as though it were just another non-governmental organization. That attitude cannot stand up to dispassionate, up-to-date political analysis. The representative nature of the IPU is unquestionable. Its legitimacy is beyond dispute. Its tradition is an honourable one. It was established before the United Nations, indeed before the League of Nations. It was the first permanent forum for multilateral political negotiations.

Chile is participating in this debate to support the draft resolution before the Assembly on this item. But we are here also to say that we need to reflect seriously on the Union's status in its relationship with the United Nations. We should find the creativity, imagination and political will to enable the parliaments of the world to participate in our debates with the dignity warranted by their democratic representative nature and their political importance.

Let me continue with some personal remarks. I shall never forget the message of the IPU to the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, over whose Preparatory Committee I had the honour to preside. That message stated with crystal clarity that we must

> "build new foundations for human security which ensure the security of people — in their homes, in their jobs, in their communities and in their environment".

The message noted too that we must "reconcile ... concerns of equity with those of efficiency".

More than three years after Copenhagen, it is unfortunately clear that everything said there about the dangers of unbridled globalization is coming true. For the future, it is important not to repeat the mistakes of the past. In my view, the most important thing is to recognize that no single agency of the multilateral system, with its own interpretation of the crisis and its own proposals for resolving it, has the least chance of stabilizing the world's uncertain economic and social situation. We cannot continue offering sectoral solutions to interdependent, structural and systemic problems. To the contrary, only a holistic, integrated vision can yield solutions. A whole range of sensibilities must be expressed around the table. The financial concerns of the International Monetary Fund, the development needs articulated by the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, the trade dimension that falls within the responsibility of the World Trade Organization, and demands for more and better jobs and

for personal security as articulated by the International Labour Organization.

In that context, some words I had the honour to address to the Union when it met at Copenhagen retain their validity:

> "One of the great challenges of the fine legislative task you embody is to ensure that the law responds to changing social needs, that the law is a modern, dynamic instrument responsive to people's needs, and that the law leads to and paves the way for change and is not a source of paralysis and regression."

Let me make four specific proposals. First, increasing numbers of parliamentarians should be included in delegations to the General Assembly. Secondly, following the conference of speakers of national parliaments in the year 2000, there should be an annual meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as part of the General Assembly session, with an agenda of timely items agreed upon in conjunction with the Secretary-General. Thirdly, we should pursue our work on the idea of a permanent parliamentary chamber within the structure of the United Nations. And finally, two or three topics of importance to the United Nations and the specialized agencies should be selected; all members of the Union would discuss these with a view to making specific contributions to the United Nations system.

I shall end as I began: it is an honour for me today to address the Assembly on the question of cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. But more than anything else, I wish the intellectual and political agenda of the United Nations to include the question of the United Nations granting the Union a new status in the future, a status consonant with its political importance and giving full and proper value to the representative nature and democratic legitimacy of what is the oldest multilateral political organization in the world. I hope that this will soon take place.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino): I should like to thank the delegation of Spain for presenting this year the draft resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

The Republic of San Marino considers the cooperation between these two organizations essential since they are closely connected and complementary. One of the weaknesses of the United Nations is that, being an Organization of States, it sometimes does not pay enough attention to the interests of the single citizen but favours a more advantageous solution for the Government. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an organization of parliamentarians, gives us a different perspective on the issue — the perspective of representatives of individuals or groups of people.

Furthermore, the IPU has a complementary function to the United Nations to inform the work of the United Nations at the national level. We are convinced that the United Nations valuable contribution to economic and social development in the last 50 years is sometimes not quite recognized. The cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU is therefore fundamental as a source of exchange of experiences and information.

San Marino welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and takes note with satisfaction of the improved relations between the United Nations and the IPU in the past year. We are convinced that the newly opened liaison office to the United Nations in New York will represent a meaningful link between the two organizations.

The relationship between the IPU and the United Nations could also make a relevant contribution to the new and restored democracies. It will help implement programmes of information in support of new government systems. The IPU experience, spread through reliable United Nations channels, may facilitate the assertion of democratic institutions in new parliaments.

My delegation and my country will follow with great interest the conference of presiding officers of national parliaments that is to take place in conjunction with the United Nations Millennium Assembly. This initiative will provide valuable support for the successful outcome of this project.

Finally, I should like to emphasize the importance of the cooperation between the IPU and United Nations agencies. The two formal agreements of cooperation between IPU and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and between IPU and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) formalize the important links that already exist. The results of these agreements will give fresh impetus to important initiatives in the interest of the well-being and progress of the international community.

San Marino supports the beginning of discussions to formalize the cooperation agreement between the IPU and

the International Labour Organization (ILO), in particular in the field of employment, where the collaboration of the parliamentary representatives is more visible.

San Marino is very active in the work of the IPU and hopes that this cooperation will be enhanced. This link will allow the United Nations to listen to more voices and turn the needs of people into action.

Mr. Zmeevski (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The period that has elapsed since the discussion at the previous session of the General Assembly of the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has been marked by increased activity in the interaction between both organizations on a very broad range of problems, from conflict prevention to gender issues.

A substantive contribution to resolving the questions currently facing the international community was made by the 100th IPU Conference, which took place in Moscow from 6 to 12 September last. More than 700 parliamentarians from 123 countries participated, including 51 presiding officers of parliaments and representatives of 29 international organizations, including the United Nations.

The message of welcome to Conference participants was sent by the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin. The Moscow forum — the most representative in the history of the IPU, the oldest union of parliamentarians in the world — had a largely positive outcome and yielded significant results. In the assessment of participants, the Conference's results promoted the further strengthening of inter-parliamentary cooperation and followed along the lines of the major areas of activity of the United Nations.

The resolution adopted at the Conference, entitled "Strong action by national parliaments in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure the promotion of all human rights in the twenty-first century", provided an assessment of the progress achieved during the last 50 years in the area of human rights. It contains an appeal for a further stepping up of efforts of parliaments in this area and rejects double standards in approaches to human rights.

The representatives drew up a far-ranging programme for parliamentary action, including legislative measures aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the protection of human rights. Also adopted were recommendations to hold in certain countries special sessions devoted to the anniversary of the Declaration, in order to form parliamentary committees on monitoring compliance with human rights and to consider the question of organizing conferences of representatives of the relevant parliamentary bodies. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Inter-Parliamentary Union also reached an agreement on continued cooperation following the outcome of the Moscow meeting.

At the meeting of women parliamentarians held within the framework of the Conference and in the light of the recommendations of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, concrete proposals were drawn up aimed at ensuring the effective participation of women in public life, thereby enabling them fully to enjoy their political, economic and social rights.

Serious attention was devoted also at the Conference to the question of combating illegal drug trafficking and organized crime.

The resolution on the problem of water resources recommended that parliaments adopt the necessary legislative measures to prevent the water-resource problem from hindering the sustainable development of humankind. It also reflected the dominant view concerning the development of cooperation through the United Nations, including the joint search for economically acceptable and ecologically sound solutions in this area.

The Conference approved the reports of a number of special committees of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, including those on human rights violations involving parliamentarians, in which resolutions were adopted regarding the fate of 255 legislators from 16 countries; on the question of the Middle East; on the monitoring of the situation in Cyprus; and on promoting respect for international law.

The Moscow forum's focus on prospects for the future is reflected in the intensification of cooperation of the Union with the United Nations. An important role must be played in this respect by the meeting of presiding officers of parliaments, which is planned for the year 2000 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

As emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

> "This welcome initiative is intended to be held in conjunction with and provide parliamentary support to the proposed Millennium Assembly to be convened by the United Nations in September 2000." *(A/53/458, para. 4)*

We are convinced that efforts to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU will contribute to resolving the global challenges facing humankind at the dawn of the twenty-first century and serve as an impressive example of cooperation with the United Nations for other international organizations.

Mr. Al-Hadid (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): One of the most daunting challenges that we are facing today is how to take joint action to achieve a society of peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development. These are linked and interdependent goals. They require new thinking and new cooperation based on new ethics and new values. This means not only abandoning the mentality of the cold war but also moving from an idea of citizenship based on competition with others to global citizenship.

A starting point for this may lie in adjusting the structure of the United Nations so that it will be more democratic and more encouraging of international partnership. The United Nations has begun the process of opening itself to and cooperating with the institutions of civil society. This is a sound policy because it enhances the expansion of popular participation in the development process and, consequently, collective responsibility for this process. Thus, this policy supports the growth of democratization throughout the countries of the world and encourages constructive interchange among its civil societies.

Among the most important new tasks are the strenuous efforts to deepen democracy in theory and in practice. States should be treated in accordance with their approximation of democratic life and respect for human rights and freedoms. Such treatment should also take into account how States distance themselves from the factors creating conflicts and differences, and their construction of their existence in line with the precepts of peace and security and of a better life for their citizens. All of this is within the purview of the international system, which is based on justice, the sharing of experiences and views, and enhancing societal progress.

Only a few years separate us from the twenty-first century. We are witnessing radical transformations in many States of the world. These changes are reflected in the emergence of legislative power as a symbol of democracy and justice and in the fulfilment of its role in national and global political action. This requires looking into these experiences with the support, care, cooperation and coordination it deserves, between the United Nations and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which is to be regarded as the wider umbrella containing all the parliaments of the world.

In Jordan we take pride in our democratic progress, and we are striving to deepen and develop it. On this basis Jordan welcomes the opportunity to host the IPU Conference in Amman in the year 2000. Jordan supports a formula by which the United Nations, along with the world's parliaments, will interact with the will of States and peoples and achieve a fruitful partnership which will become part of the work of the new United Nations.

From this rostrum I wish to record my country's belief in and fundamental commitment to the concepts of international cooperation and of coordination with the parliaments of the world, as represented by the IPU on the one hand and the international Organization and its various institutions on the other hand. This emanates from the belief in the need to expand the concept of institutional democracy, to buttress its pillars and to have States and peoples participate in the pursuit of the attainment of security, justice and peace for all peoples of the world.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on agenda item 28, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

Allow me first of all to indicate my country's great interest in this topic. From the very beginning Uruguay has supported the inclusion of this item for discussion both in the General Assembly and in the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Since the signing of the agreement between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations on 24 July 1996, Uruguay has been convinced that this closer relationship between the world organization of parliaments and the world Organization of Governments facilitates the efficient conduct of mutually complementary activities and makes it possible for the two organizations to work together more closely in joint endeavours in specific areas for the benefit of humankind.

These closer ties, in my country's opinion, are in keeping with the nature and composition of the two organizations, since the one reflects the voices of political parties, which are the legitimate representatives of our citizens, and covers the broadest spectrum of representativeness, whereas in the other are heard the voices of Governments. Thus, the conjunction of the two provides for the broadest and most complete representation of the opinions of States.

My delegation appreciates the contribution made by the Secretary-General in document A/53/458 of 5 October and welcomes the progress and achievements of the two organizations in the course of the past year. These accomplishments represent a significant mutual strengthening at the institutional level and coordination on a number of important topics on the international agenda.

In this regard, we are very pleased at the proposal that the Inter-Parliamentary Union should hold a conference of speakers of national parliaments in New York concurrently with the holding of the Millennium Assembly at the United Nations, scheduled for September 2000.

As may be noted in the report submitted by the Secretary-General, there is a multitude of activities being carried out and promoted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, activities that the United Nations should not ignore but rather highlight, recognize and support. The recent opening of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York is yet another sign of the smooth dovetailing of the work of the two organizations, and it will help optimize even further their mutual relations and contribute to the defence and promotion of their major interests.

A consistent feature of Uruguay's foreign policy has been that the major principles and themes that guide its conduct externally are shared by the broad majority of the domestic political actors. The Parliament of Uruguay is resolutely committed to the objectives of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and contributes to them to the utmost of its ability. At the regional and subregional levels, parliamentary delegations from my country have followed and continue to follow very carefully the handling of the topics addressed by the Latin American Parliament, whose current presiding officer is a Uruguayan legislator.

Interest in — and belief in the need of — involving parliaments in the conduct of foreign affairs has also been a special concern of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), which by the Ouro Preto Protocol created a joint parliamentary commission, which provides for the representation in MERCOSUR of the parliaments of its member countries.

Those of us who are convinced that there is no better form of Government than the democratic system must accept and defend the existence of political parties as the legitimate conduits of public opinion. There can be no democracy without political parties. And if there is no democracy, there is no institutional stability, or development, or full exercise of human rights.

For all these reasons, Uruguay supports the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union which is now before the General Assembly. We endorse its content and its aims, and for that reason, my country is one of the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Lastly, allow me, as a Uruguayan and as a representative of my Government to the United Nations, to take the liberty of saying that whenever we speak of the Inter-Parliamentary Union we must remember Mr. Hugo Batalla, who passed away on 3 October last, while carrying out the functions of Vice President of the Republic, a post to which he was elected at the last national elections, in November 1994.

As a parliamentarian, Mr. Batalla always represented our country in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, within which, to Uruguay's honour, he was elected to high offices, chiefly because of his tireless defence of human rights, democracy and social justice as indispensable principles of human activity.

There could be no more accurate tribute to him than the words uttered at his funeral by the President of the Republic, Mr. Julio Maria Sanguinetti:

> "A man whose heart permeated his reason, his sense of life, his attitude towards his fellow man and the spirit that guided him every day as he sallied forth with his traditional optimism and his warm smile to work, to serve and to help. He may possibly have been, in depth and in substance, the most Uruguayan of all Uruguayans."

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I have the honour to address the Assembly on the very important issue of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The struggle of the Namibian people was firmly based on the demand for democracy, freedom and our inalienable right to self-determination. Since independence, my Government has been very active in working towards a new society based on the principles of unity, democracy, social justice, equality, the dignity of human beings and economic and social prosperity for all Namibians. From the outset, the Namibian Government committed itself to reconciliation, democracy, nation-building and development. These principles are clearly contained in the ideals of the international community today, which embraces good governance, accountability, transparency, the rule of law and political pluralism.

Namibia had the honour of hosting the 99th Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference, held last April in Windhoek. In his opening address, the President of Namibia made the following prefatory remarks,

> "As elected representatives of the people, we must be mindful of the aspirations and hopes of our people and articulate these aspirations in a manner resulting in tangible programmes and projects which will improve the standard of living of our people. We must remain seized of the problems and challenges of fighting crime, poverty, homelessness and despair, which confront our people. We must search for solutions to these problems. We must be open to and approachable by the people who elected us to office. We must listen to their opinions and views. It is only when we remain in touch with the electorate that they will put their trust in us."

At that meeting the IPU discussed and took decisions which, as presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/458), are complementary to and supportive of the work of the United Nations system. The IPU expressed its support for the work of the Secretary-General in a number of activities undertaken the world over, particularly in terms of conflict resolution. The other resolutions adopted at the IPU Conference dealt with HIV/AIDS, foreign debt and the situation in Kosovo.

Namibia welcomes the continued efforts of the IPU for the promotion of representative democracy. In this regard, we note with pleasure the working relationship which exists between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the IPU, as illustrated by the meeting of presidents and senior parliamentary leaders from African parliaments that took place in Harare. The subject of that meeting concerned the contributions that parliaments can make to democracy in Africa and the mechanisms for strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation on the continent.

Another reflection of a core activity of the IPU was the decision taken at the Windhoek meeting to promote representative democracy through greater partnership between women and men in society in general, and in political life in particular. In this regard, we express my country's appreciation of and support for the cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the IPU. It is gratifying to note the planned tripartite meeting of representatives of Governments, parliaments and international organizations on the occasion of the special session on the five-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to be held in the year 2000. Such concrete collaborations pave the way for better implementation of the outcomes of major global conferences.

We are equally encouraged by the continued support of the IPU for the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the withdrawal of reservations thereto. My delegation applauds the efforts of the IPU on its emphasis on the empowerment of women, particularly for women parliamentarians.

Another milestone is the opening of the IPU Liaison Office in New York, which no doubt will greatly facilitate and assist the further development of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. We believe this Office will serve as a focal point for the different parliament members from around the globe visiting the United Nations and will facilitate a greater parliamentarian presence and input at United Nations meetings.

It is evident from the report provided to us that parliamentarians have a role to play in strengthening the aims and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. Namibia wholeheartedly expresses its support for the continued strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and the IPU.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At the 1997 summit meeting of the heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Malawi, the SADC Parliamentary Forum was established as an integral but

autonomous body within the SADC structure. This subregional parliamentary association is committed to the enhancement of justice, democracy, the rule of law, development and good governance within the SADC region. The Namibian Speaker of Parliament is the Chairperson of that body.

Parliaments are necessary, but not sufficient edifices of power and legitimacy in themselves. Parliaments, where they exist, require an all-round back-up system consisting of, among other things, internal peace and social harmony, regular elections, multi-party politics, effective administration of justice, economic productivity and, above all, an informed and active public.

Finally, I wish to reiterate our full support for the cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU and hope that the draft resolution before us today will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Salamanca (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Bolivia and on my own behalf, I wish to begin by thanking the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for submitting the report contained in document A/53/458 of 5 October, in which he gives a detailed account of the cooperation activities between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

I also wish to place on record my delegation's appreciation to Mr. Miguel Angel Martínez and Mr. Anders B.Johnsson, the highest officials of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, for having opened, in March 1998, the Liaison Office of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at United Nations Headquarters in New York, an event which will undoubtedly strengthen the relationship between the two institutions.

In the same vein, I wish to convey our thanks and appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations, and in particular to Ambassador Inocencio Arias for introducing the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.12 on the item of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Since its inception in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been the most important permanent forum for multilateral dialogue, promoting peace and international arbitration. In its time, it contributed to creating the League of Nations, the United Nations and the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

Its relevance and dedication to the work of supporting and cooperating to realize the purposes and principles of the United Nations, regional inter-parliamentary, international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working throughout the world for peace, democracy, cooperation among peoples and many other issues of world concern, make coordination with the United Nations of crucial importance.

My country, Bolivia, which is striving to consolidate its democracy, belongs to four parliamentary groupings within the Inter-Parliamentary Union: the Latin American Parliament, the Andean Parliament, the Amazonian Parliament and the Indigenous Parliament. This demonstrates our democratic, multicultural and multi-ethnic tradition.

Draft resolution A/53/L.12, which my country is honoured to sponsor, enthusiastically supports the proposed convening of a conference of presiding officers of national parliaments at United Nations Headquarters in 2000, on the occasion of the Millennium Assembly. This proposal was first put forward at the ninety-ninth Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, held in Windhoek, Namibia, in April this year, when the Council also addressed the subjects of the external debt of the third world and the situation in Kosovo.

At the same time, we wish to highlight the resolution adopted at the Conference held in Moscow in September on the promotion and protection of all human rights in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, echoing the remarks of the Permanent Representative of Spain, Mr. Arias, I would propose that the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.12 be adopted by acclamation.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the fact that, again this year, a meeting of parliamentarians has been held in the context of the regular session of the General Assembly. The contribution of legislators to our work is unquestionably very valuable, for they are the spokespersons of the most wide-ranging and pluralistic aspirations and interests of the peoples of the United Nations.

In the domestic context, the Government of Mexico attaches particular importance to the strengthening of links between the executive and legislative branches as a crucial factor in democratic life. It believes that this same

principle should apply in international relations. Strengthening the bonds between the international reach of the legislative branches of a hundred-odd countries and the United Nations enhances the democratic significance of our Organization. That is why, year after year, Mexico has co-sponsored the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, an institution which reflects the international interests of our legislators and which, as the representative of Chile noted, was founded even earlier than the United Nations. We agree with Ambassador Somavía's statement that the Inter-Parliamentary Union cannot be seen as just another non-governmental organization. It deserves special treatment, which we should seek to accord it.

The cooperation agreement signed between the two institutions in 1996 sets the legal framework for the activities in which the Inter-Parliamentary Union supports United Nations initiatives. In this regard, cooperation between the two organizations has generated momentum that should be pursued in many areas indicated in the Secretary-General's report and the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.12 before us. We hope that the General Assembly will be able to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

Ms. Ríos-Montt (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me, on behalf of the delegation of Guatemala, to take part in the discussion on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union with a view to strengthening that relationship, mainly because, although the United Nations works closely with the executive bodies, our parliaments are very important.

It is true that from a functional point of view parliaments are generally multifaceted organizations. The variety of their functions is explained by their distinctive role, which makes them political instruments of the principle of popular sovereignty. Proceeding from that concept, parliaments have the right and the duty to intervene in various ways in all the stages of the political process. Their activities therefore include those of stimulation and legislative initiatives, discussion and deliberation, inquiry and control and support and legitimization. Such activities are, of course, included in the basic functions of representation, legislation and providing a balance to the executive branch.

Parliaments therefore play a substantial role in political life, as their members are the trustees of power and the legitimate representatives of the people. Whether the relationship between a Government and a parliament is characterized by division of labour, cooperation or moderate or strong opposition, parliaments are and should be institutions that are fundamental and indispensable for democracy. That is why a cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union is necessary.

This is a foundation and a platform for beginning the process and then to continue with other types of mechanisms, such as the proposed conference of speakers of national parliaments in the year 2000, and thus to understand that parliaments must not be confined to secondary roles. There should be no more merely decorative roles, no more parliaments that do public relations for the party in power. Our institutions are made up of men and women who want to ensure respect for human rights, equality, justice and peace, and we come together in the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

That is why Guatemala hopes that draft resolution A/53/L.12 will be adopted unanimously.

Mr. Bocalandro (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly at this plenary meeting on the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and to lend my country's support by joining with the other sponsors.

In that context, I should like to convey the gratitude of my delegation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, Mr. Miguel Angel Martínez, for their efforts to strengthen and intensify the bonds between the two organizations. We were pleased with the report of the Secretary-General, which summarizes the recent activities carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union to promote peace and security, representative democracy and sustainable socio-economic development.

Furthermore, the degree of representativeness and the profound democratic tradition that guides that organization are well known, and we are pleased that outstanding Argentine legislators take an active part in its work. We are also heartened to know that the United Nations receives increasing support from the Union in the area of providing parliamentarians with technical assistance and advisory services.

We believe that the Union's activities in this regard, and its cooperation with the United Nations, should be

encouraged, because the Union includes representatives of most societies, and its opinions are of great significance for the decisions that the United Nations is called upon to take.

The signing of the agreement between the two organizations on 24 July 1996 made it possible to lay the foundation for institutional support for the cooperation established so as to heighten the democratic awareness of States and to reinforce parliamentarianism and representative democracy.

The draft resolution before us gives fresh impetus to that cooperation, and helps bolster and deepen the process of cooperation that has already been consolidated, opening new and interesting prospects for cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations.

The draft resolution highlights the fact that, with the aim of providing parliamentary support to United Nations activities, the Union has decided to hold a conference of parliamentarians in the year 2000, which will take place at the same time as the session of the General Assembly commemorating the millennium. We believe that this initiative should be welcomed, and we firmly support it. That occasion will be a unique event to which the presence of parliamentarians will lend particular relevance.

For all those reasons, the Argentine Republic is co-sponsoring the draft resolution, as it has done in previous cases, in the conviction that we will thereby be contributing to the development of the ideals sought by the international community.

Mr. Suh Dae-won (Republic of Korea): Over the past decade, the world has witnessed the planting and the growth of democracy in many countries which had previously suffered under the weight of authoritarian and oppressive regimes. Not only has democracy broken free in many nations, but where the framework of democratic principles and institutions existed, we have seen real democracy develop. The worldwide call for democracy has penetrated almost every nation, as we see the populations of the world clamour for representative Governments.

Last February, the Republic of Korea inaugurated the Government of President Kim Dae-jung. For the first time in Korea's 50-year constitutional history, the Korean people demonstrated their aspiration for real democracy by voting for the opposition party to accede to power. Since then, President Kim has made every effort to foster democracy and a market economy in parallel with each other in the belief that democracy is the natural partner of real development.

The international community's desire for building democratic processes and institutions is embodied in the principles of the United Nations. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), created in 1889, was at the forefront in the quest for a democratic world. It is only fitting that these two international bodies have joined their efforts to bring about peace and security through democratic ideals.

The close cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU can only better serve the purpose of a peaceful and democratic world. The IPU, over the decades, has served as a tireless advocate of democratic principles and has striven for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. So, too, has this been the mandate of the United Nations. Through cooperation and the pooling of their strength these two international bodies can bring their vast experience and expertise to the task of promoting the globalization of democracy.

Since the United Nations and the IPU signed an agreement of cooperation, in 1996, they have supported and assisted each other in the areas of peace and security, democracy, human rights and sustainable development. The Secretary-General's report has been most comprehensive and informative in describing the coordinated efforts made by the IPU and the United Nations system. The delegation of the Republic of Korea is very pleased to note that this cooperation has been strengthened and facilitated by the opening of the IPU Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York in March 1998.

We have noted the support extended by the IPU to United Nations efforts for the prevention of conflicts and the restoration of peace in war-torn countries. In turn, we commend the IPU's sustained contribution to building democracy and providing technical assistance to the United Nations at national levels, as well as its close working relationship with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in promoting good governance. In this regard, I should like to commend yesterday's signing of arrangements for a multi-year parliamentary support programme between UNDP and the IPU. I am convinced that the arrangement will further expand the scope of cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations.

As this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we find it

rewarding that the IPU and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have also chosen to establish close cooperation. They have both steadfastly endeavoured to encourage stronger involvement of parliaments throughout the world in the promotion and protection of human rights, producing tangible results at the national level and influencing international relations.

The 163rd session of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, held in Moscow in September, proved to be a remarkable success. We are pleased to note that the IPU now comprises 137 member parliaments and four international parliamentary associations, attesting to its universal scope.

As a continuation of the cooperation efforts of the United Nations system and the IPU, we welcome the initiative of the 163rd session of the Inter-Parliamentary Council to convene a conference of presiding officers of national parliaments at the United Nations in the year 2000, in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly.

As the twenty-first century approaches, we are still faced with various challenges, such as the threat of nuclear annihilation, regional conflicts, poverty, abuses of human rights, drug-trafficking and so on. Moreover, we are assessing the policy of globalization, which has been underpinning the rapid economic growth of Asian economies. In particular, the role of globalization has come under close scrutiny in the various regions of the world in relation to the recent financial crisis.

My delegation hopes that the conference of presiding officers of national parliaments will make substantial contributions in meeting those challenges in the twenty-first century, in tandem with the United Nations.

The Republic of Korea, in the belief that the United Nations and the IPU have a joint mission to make prosperity, peace and democracy universal in the next century, joins in the sponsorship of the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". My delegation is grateful to Ambassador Inocencio Arias, Permanent Representative of Spain, for his introduction of the draft resolution before us, and we earnestly hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): It gives me a great pleasure to address the General Assembly on the subject of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

I should like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report outlining the deepening and consolidation of cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations.

Armenia highly values the role of parliamentarians in promoting pluralistic democracy. We are convinced that national parliamentarians, by working together at the international level, have a major role to play in helping realize the goals of the United Nations. We strongly believe that the ideals of democracy that parliaments embody should inspire and govern relations not only within, but also between, States.

In this respect, we attach great importance to the cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, being convinced that the development of this cooperation will bring to the United Nations the diverse will of "We the peoples".

The increasing, active participation of parliamentarians in international affairs is constantly gaining strength, lending new impetus to the participation of civil society in international activities.

The possibilities of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU are enormous, especially in the fields of economic and social development, peace and security, international law, human rights, gender issues and governance.

The importance of conflict prevention for global peace is now a universally recognized fact. In this respect we welcome the resolution on the prevention of conflicts and restoration of peace in war-torn countries, adopted at the IPU Conference in Windhoek last April. Given that parliamentarians are called on to express the will and voice of the people, it is extremely important that they take part in the promotion of global peace and security. This is becoming a reality of today's world.

In this respect, it is with deep regret that two days ago we received news of the cancellation of the meeting between the Speakers of the Parliaments and Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and representatives of the leadership of Nagorny Karabakh. The meeting, which was scheduled to be held in Strasbourg under the auspices of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, has been cancelled because of the inability of the Azerbaijani authorities to respect previously assumed commitments. The Azerbaijani side had objected to the participation of Nagorny Karabakh in the Strasbourg

consultations, but eventually gave its consent to the formal hearings approved at a meeting of the Political Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, held in Ljubljana on 3 September 1998.

Being a strong advocate of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, Armenia is convinced that its ultimate resolution can be achieved only through direct negotiations between the two conflicting parties — Nagorny Karabakh and Azerbaijan. In this context, it is greatly discouraging to see the Azerbaijani parliamentarians decline this opportunity for direct talks, especially at the level of people's representatives.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In view of this, the resolution adopted by consensus by the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, in Moscow last September, on the "Strong Action by national parliaments in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure the promotion and protection of all human rights in the twenty-first century", is of particular relevance.

I should like to stress the importance of adding a parliamentarian dimension to the tasks carried out by the United Nations. I am convinced that the conference of speakers of national parliaments, to be held in 2000, will provide parliamentarian support to the Millennium Assembly and give its participants an opportunity to express their views on how national parliaments and their world organization can work together with the United Nations in the new millennium in efforts to create a better and more prosperous world in the light of the current reform process of the United Nations.

Allow me to conclude by expressing the hope of my delegation that draft resolution A/53/L.12, which is sponsored by a large number of Member States, including Armenia, will be adopted by consensus, as have draft resolutions on this subject in previous years.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.